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ABSTRACT

The instructor's manual focuses on child abuse. The manual includes a pre- and posttest; information on the increased risk of abuse among exceptional children; and discussions of definitions, identification, etiology, teacher's role, components of school policy, dealing with abusive parents, and the nontraditional approach of Parents Anonymous. A program evaluation form is also provided. (CL)

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MANCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSERVICE TRAINING PROJECT

Year III 1980 - 1981

PROJECT: LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT
MCC INSERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

CHILD ABUSE AND THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD: "HOW TO STOP BEING ABUSED BY CHILD ABUSE"

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Instructor's Manual

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I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to those parents I have had the privilege of knowing through my work in Parents Anonymous. They have all taught me so much about the human spirit and its capacity for growth and change through mutual help. We have shared a joint adventure.

A very special thanks to my husband Karl and my two sons, Karl and Chris. Their support has been invaluable. Karen

Gaby, thank you for being there. Thanks, too, Dr. Ronald T. Fredrickson, model friend and teacher.

Sebastian

Child Abuse And The Exceptional Child

Pre Post Test

1. Child Abuse is defined as the physical or mental abuse of a child.
   a) true
   b) false

2. Both of the extremes of shyness, withdrawl, passivity on the one hand and disruptiveness, aggressiveness and destructiveness on the other hand are indicators of possible abuse.
   a) true
   b) false

3. A child who is always tired and tends to fall asleep in class is a possible victim of abuse.
   a) true
   b) false

4. Children who are seen or "special" or "different" are:
   a) more likely to be abused by their parents
   b) less likely to be abused by their parents
   c) likely to be abused as children who are not seen as "special" or "different"
   d) given special individualized caring by most parents

5. The increase in child abuse appears to reflect simply an increase in reporting as the problem has received more publicity.
   a) true
   b) false

6. Parents Anonymous has been both the most successful and the most cost effective form of intervention with abusive parents.
   a) true
   b) false

7. One-to-one therapy, group therapy, and counseling can significantly help abusive parents with their abuse problem.
   a) true
   b) false

8. Abusive parents who are hesitant to "level" with friends or relatives are nevertheless still open with professionals.
   a) true
   b) false

9. Biting a child is one form of psychotic child abuse.
   a) true
   b) false

10. The key to effective communication with parents with an abuse problem is:
    a) knowing the right thing to say
    b) being friendly
    c) talking only about the child's problem
    d) listening

II. High Risk Groups

Throughout the school system many children in each age group and grade havelbeen or are presently being abused. Some of these children are more easily identifiable than others; certainly children who bear the signs of physical abuse (bruises, broken limbs, burns etc.) are often visible and, therefore, recognized by the teacher, school nurse and other school personnel. The less obvious forms of abuse are not as easily recognized. How can teachers be aware of child abuse? What symptomsare clues to child abuse? What can teachers do in the event of child abuse? Who are the high risk groups prone to child abuse? Then, can the teacher work effectively with the child, the parents, school administrators and the local legal authorities? Where can the teacher obtain help?

The purpose of this workshop is to focus on one of the highest child abuse risk groups, exceptional children. Teachers who work with exceptional children are subjected to many frustrations and pressures. These stem from the problems presented by the handicap(s) of the exceptional child, the parents, the school administration and the expectations of each group. Through this workshop material and suggestions will be presented which will facilitate the teachers', ability to cope with children who have been abused. Children who are seen as "special," "different" or "exceptional" by their parents are frequently termed as high risk child abuse groups. Other children may also be considered high risk. For example, children of teenage parents, (one out of every five children in U.S. today are born to women 17 years of age and younger). Another high risk group is children under the age of three. These children are frequently home and are not visible in the community. The greatest risk of death due to child abuse occurs in this Pre-school age group.

In order to speak of exceptional children, it is necessary to define the term. For the purpose of this workshop we will include all the children eligible for special education services in the public school system: mentally retarded, visually impaired, hearing impaired, learning disability, physically handicapped, socially and emotionally maladjusted, neurologically impaired, and speech or language impaired.

It is also important to note that some children, who appear "normal" to the general public may be seen by their parents as exceptional in some manner and, therefore, fall into the high risk group for child abuse.

III. Parenting Fantasy

Our bias is this: in order to make a change in a young child's life, particularly the elementary school aged child, one must first begin with the parent. An understanding of parental feelings is essential if the teacher and community worker are to reach the parent who is prone to child abuse. All persons, whether parents or not, have had parenting experiences, either as parents or as children. Our own feelings about these experiences are important for they greatly influence our own responses and reactions to the parents of the exceptional child.

In order to clarify these roles and to stimulate discussion, we will participate in a parenting fantasy.

IV. Film

"Child Abuse - Cradle of Violence." Film will be introduced, viewed and discussed.

V. Definition: What is Child Abuse?

Each day more literature is being written on child abuse. Statistics reveal an ever increasing number of reports on child abuse. It is not clear if this means an increase in incidence or a greater number of reports. Historically child abuse has occured since the beginning of time. The first law prohibiting child abuse in the United States was passed in the late 1800's. That child was protected by a law to prevent cruelty to animals. Laws now exist throughout the country to protect children. The definition of child abuse by law is not as broad as the definitions that will be used int this workshop. The workshop definitions of child abuse are taken from the Parents Anonymous model. The Parents Anonymous model describes child abuse in six different categories:

1. Physical abuse - burns, bruises, bites
2. Physical neglect - improper clothes, improper medical care
3. Emotional neglect - lack of nuturance
4. Emotional abuse - tearing down of the self image
5. Verbal abuse - derogatory language
6. Sexual abuse - incest, child pornography

It is necessary to recognize that most human beings are sometimes abusive. We all have negative feelings and these negative feelings and the behaviors they may produce can become abusive when they develop into an on going pattern. Parents differ in their attitudes regarding discipline and it is important to recognize these differences. A problem can be termed "Child Abuse" when expressions of negative feelings begin to affect the parent-child relationship and the child exhibits symptoms of child abuse. In the majority of abuse cases, it may be surprising to find that the parents basically care for and love their children. Often, these parents want to change their children's behavior, but are unsure how to do so. Many times they feel helpless, trapped, and out of control. The key for educators is to work through the parent's basic desire to be a good parent. This can often be the starting point.

One of the more emotionally laden forms of child abuse is sexual abuse. These indicators are usually less visible.

VI. Identifying Characteristics of Abused Children and Their Parents

What are the symptoms of an abused child?

Dr. Vincent Fontana in his book, "Somewhere a Child is Crying" gives an excellent list of behaviors exhibited by a child who may be abused. Teachers can look for these symptoms in school children. The instructor will provide this list.

When working with parents of abused children certain behaviors may be clues to an abuse situation. These behaviors are also on your list.

VII. Etiology of Child Abuse

There are several factors which are usually present in a child abuse situation. Dr. Raymond Helfer, Associate Professor, Department of Human Develop, College of Human Medicine, Michigan State University, breaks these factors into three components:

1. Potential for child abuse
2. Special kind of child
3. A crisis or series of crises

These factors are usually present in one or both of the parents. The term "potential for abuse" relates to how the parents themselves were reared. Statistics suggest 50-60% of the parents who abuse their offspring were abused children, or had some disturbed parenting experiences as children.

Often we find one or both parents have had abuse in their background. This does not suggest that those persons who were abused will automatically abuse their children, it may, however, serve as an indicator of potentiality for abuse.

Another factor in child abuse is how effective parents are in obtaining help from persons in the community. Parents with abuse problems often tend to lead very isolated lives. They usually do not feel good about themselves and often do not trust other people. This results in a tendency to be guarded and threatened by authority figures, social workers, teachers, guidance counselors, and others. Due to their poor self image, abusive parents tend to be ingratiating. They desperately want approval, desire acceptance, and wish to be liked, even though they do not see themselves as likable. A parent with feelings of inadequency will not freely tell an authority figure what is actually happening in their life. They fear rejection. It is this fear which causes parents not to be straight with teachers.

Parents with abuse problems usually choose partners from similar backgrounds. This results in there being a family problem. Because of the limitations in their own childhood, these parents are not able to recognize each others problems and are, therefore, unable to be mutually supportive.

Parents with a potential for abuse often have unrealistic expectations for themselves and their children. They frequently expect their children to do something for them and to give them love. They often do not understand normal childhood development and, therefore, are not prepared for the extent of dependency of an infant or young child. In virtually every abusive family there is one child who is viewed as different or special. This may be the result of a real handicap or the parents perception from a previous relationship, or a child who exhibits behavior which the parent dislikes in himself may become the object of abuse.

The third component is "crisis." A crisis may not be the type recognized by society, such as those brought on by poverty, economic trouble, housing, clothing or food shortage. Less severe situations can also be viewed as a "crisis" when they bring about a change in the family balance. For example: The husband receives a promotion resulting in a change in his working hours. He is no longer home for dinner. For the mother, this creates a real crisis.

VIII. How to Enable The Family To Get Help?

How do you feel about being asked to do something for which you were not trained? A discussion will be led by instructor.

School systems are in an excellent position to recognize and identify abused and neglected children. This can be accomplished through observation of the child's behavior, appearance, and in some less common occasions, verbally, when the child might relate an abusive episode to a teacher or counselor.

[illegible] These

Dr. Robert W. Bensel suggests guidelines for school systems. These guides fall into two categories:

1. First is the need for more understanding of the problem of child abuse and the importance of making a report.
2. Second is to develop a clear school policy.
   a. A procedure of reporting child abuse incidents to appropriate agencies;
   b. A procedure for school personel to work with the agencies in terms of treatment and prevention.

Before discussions can take place of how the school can effectively work in treatment and prevention of child abuse, the factors that may cause a teacher to hesitate in making referrals need to be considered. This list will be further discussed by the instructor.

A. Fear

B. Uncertainty

C. Not knowing or not understanding how to make a report

D. Working relationships with Division of Child and Youth Services (DCYS)

E. No support

F. Fear of legal envolvement

G. Viewing child as unruly.

IX. Role Play

Procedures for working with suspected child abuse which will be explored through role play.

X. Suggested Guidelines: Stop Being Abused by Abuse

The instructor will lead a session in "Brainstorming" a school policy should include:

1. Responsibilities and legal immunity for school personnel.
2. Specific guarantee to employees in case of harassment or abuse from parents.
3. A policy to protect and educate pupils in a physically and emotionally secure environment.

Procedure:

1. Training school personnel on reporting procedures (keep it simple)

2. A policy regarding parents and guardians which will involve them prior to a DCYS report being made. This means contact with a parent; i.e. let the parents know that the school is actively interested and is making a report

3. A commitment to remain involved with DCYS and other agencies in the best interest of the child. If the family is in treatment. The school can provide consistently concerned involvement.

4. A coordinator within the system who will report to DCYS. However, any individual who suspects a case of child abuse can report to DCYS. However, any individual who suspects a case of child abuse can make the report.

XI. Talking with Abusive Parents.

Effective listening is the key. Teachers need not become therapists. It is through listening that teachers can help improve the parent-teacher relationship. The effect of listening on abusive parents is that it helps alter the parents' chronic feelings of low self esteem. Parents begin to feel that someone cares enough to listen to them.

XII. Non-Traditional Forms of Therapy - Parents Anonymous

Traditional methods of therapy have failed the Abusive parent,. Parents with abuse problems have not been significantly helped by one-to-one therapy, group therapy, counseling, institutionalization, imprisonment, or medication. The most therapeutically effective intervention for parents with abuse problems has been the most cost effective: Parents Anonymous or P.A. The Government Accounting Office May 1980 report has affirmed the effectiveness of Parents Anonymous: P.A. was significantly more effective than other treatment modalities, with a cost effective a figure. In 1979, the per family costs in the State of Connecticut was $46.00 per year for each Parents Anonymous family.

The founding of Parents Anonymous may sound similar to a movie script Jolly, K., a mother of three children, had been in and out of traditional therapies and institutions. the abuse of one of her children continued, however, throughout these attempts at therapy. In desperation, Jolly K. entered a clinic, demanding to see a therapist, telling them that if she did not, her child might die. She was able to see a psychiatric social worker, Leonard Lieber. The two worked together, but Jolly continued to feel frustrated and frightened that her child's life was still in danger. Leonard picked up on her idea, "Maybe if I got together with other mothers who have the same problem, we could help each other." He pushed her to follow through and, so began Parents Anonymous.

How does P.A. work? Groups of parents with abuse problems meet with a volunteer professional co-sponsor, and one of the parent chairs the group. (It is not group therapy.and is a therapeutic experience.

No one knows how anyone else really feels, but P.A. parents understand what another abusive parent is experiencing. They can therefore, reach each other. The parents share feelings, frustrations, successes, failures and information.

Parents Anonymous groups are mutual support systems in which parents assist each other. When a parent aids another parent both benefit. The helper feels ten feet tall knowing that they made the difference in someone's life. The person being helped knows it is coming from someone who has been there, someone who has made it, and therefore, knows that "I can make it too."

A crucial safety valve in each Parents Anonymous group is the presence of a professional with a background in human services. While this sponsor is a professional, sponsors are not paid for their work. No fees are required for membership in P.A. groups.

XIII. Post-test

XIV. Conclusion - lead by instructor

XV. Evaluation:

1. In one or two sentences describe your thoughts about child abuse with exceptional children before this workshop?

2. Describe how you now feel about dealing with the problem of child abuse in the classroom.

3. Do you feel you have benefited from this workshop.

If yes - tell how

If not- tell why

4. Do you feel that you are more prepared to deal with exceptional children in the school setting and the problems presented by their abuse?

5. What do you feel were the strengths and weaknesses of this workshop?

Please add any suggestions to improve the workshop or any additional [illegible]nts.

Briefly give your personal reaction to the workshop.

In what ways were the facilitators helpful? Any suggestions?

Suggested Readings

1. Parent Anonymous pamphlets

2. Justice, Rita and Blaire: The Abusing Family, Human Science Press, N.Y., N.Y. c. 1976

3. Helfer, Ray and Kempe, C. Henry (ed.) Child Abuse and Neglect, Ballinger Publishing Company, Cambridge, Mass. C1976

4. Wheat, Patte and Leiber, Leonard, Hope for the Children, Winston Press, Inc., Minneapolis, Mn., C1979

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Dr. Ray M. Helfer, The Etiology of Child Abuse, Pediatrics Vol. 51, No.4 Part II, April, 1973.

Gary D. Anderson, "Enhancing Listening Skills for Work With Abusing Parents," Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary SW, 1979, Family Services Assoc. of America, Dec, 1979.

Robert W. ten Bensel, M.D., MPH and Berdie, Jane, MSW, "The Neglect and Abuse of Children and Youth: The Scope of the Problem and the School's Role," Journal of School Health, 46 (8), Oct., 1976.

Holly, Sexual Misuse of Children: Tools for Understanding, SaFeco, 1979, (Available from Allenmore Medical Center, Suite A105, 19th & Union, Tacoma, Wash., 98405).

Jeannie Kokes, PhD., and Mary Jo Barrett, Inservice Training Manual from Hotline Volunteers and Parents Anonymous Sponsors, undated. (Available for Parental Stress Services, P.O. Box 809, Evanston, IL 60204.)

Connecticut Child Welfare Association & The State of Connecticut Department of Children & Youth Services Child Abuse and Neglect Reports.